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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 000111

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM KDEM ASEC TH

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES CNS SECRETARY GENERAL ON  
MARTIAL LAW

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The Ambassador spoke with General Winai Phattiyakul, Secretary General of the Council for National Security (CNS),

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at a gathering in honor of Privy Councilor Siddhi Saveysila on January 7. Pulling Winai aside, the Ambassador conveyed increasing concern over the persistence of martial law in Thailand. Recounting Prime Minister Surayud's promise to President Bush in Hanoi, which paved the way for former President Bush's December visit to Thailand, the Ambassador expressed dismay that the RTG had decided only to lift martial law partially, and the RTG had not yet formalized even this step. Winai, who understands the United States and our political system well, took on board the Ambassador's points but offered no substantive reply, perhaps due in part to the social setting. The Ambassador is scheduled to have a private lunch with Winai on January 11 and will further discuss this and other issues at that time.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador met on January 8 with National Legislative Assembly (NLA) member Prasong Soonsiri, former Secretary General of the National Security Council (NSC), and

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by his own account a key member of the group that planned the September 19 coup. The Ambassador made the same points on martial law. Prasong agreed martial law was completely unnecessary at this time. He said he understood and would convey Washington's concerns as soon as possible to Prime Minister Surayud and CNS Chairman Sonthi Boonyaratglin -- with both of whom he credibly claims a close relationship -- in the hopes of rectifying the situation. (We will report further details of the meeting with Prasong septel.)

¶3. (C) COS also raised our concerns about martial law on January 8 with the National Intelligence Agency chief and with the Deputy Commissioner of the Royal Thai Police Special Branch.

BOYCE